

First Memory

I was so small that my twig legs fit almost completely on the wooden bench. I tried to swing my feet, but they were elevated so much the toe of my black mary janes hit the back of the bench in front of me. The lace skirt was scratchy, too, so I kept pulling it up just to have my grandmother chide me in a whisper and pull it back down. My eyes roamed over the people surrounding me, thoughts buzzed around my mind in boredom. There was a man upfront pacing back and forth on the stage area. He was sweating through his shirt. He started yelling and getting red in the face, raising his hands up. All the other adults around me started to yell and raise their hands up. I slunk down further into the bench away from the screaming adults. I hoped no one noticed that I kept my arms firmly glued to my sides. The angry man walked through the aisles of benches, tapping the shoulders of different ladies as he went. He tapped the shoulder of my aunt. The ladies and my aunt followed him back upfront. He lined them all up side by side. I leaned forward a little, my eyes widening as my stomach churned. The angry man closed his eyes and touched the first woman's forehead. He shouted loud words into the microphone and the lady fell back completely stiff. I sat straight up, and my eyes began to tear up. I watched as this man made each lady fall until he got to my aunt. I desperately tugged on my grandmother's sleeve, trying to get her attention so we could save her. We had to get her before the angry man made her fall down, too. She just swatted at my hands and kept her eyes on the scene upfront. The man touched my aunt's forehead and down she went. A scream erupted out of my throat. I jumped off the bench and ran down the aisle. Adults began to yell at me to go back to my seat. A few older men tried to grab my waist as I ran by them, but I kept screaming for my aunt to wake up. I had just reached my aunt, when my grandmother scooped me into her arms. She carried me outside as I continued to protest, and struggled against her grip. I heard the angry man say, "Now if we could continue with our sermon" in an annoyed scoff as we approached the door. Outside of the church my grandmother chided me, "What do you think you were doing? You know you have to stay in your seat while we're at church. Now you've gone and made me look like a fool who can't control her own grandchild." I tried to tell her that my

aunt was trouble, and I was trying to save her, as she buckled me into the car, but my words fell onto deaf ears.